

SCRUTINY AND GOVERNANCE MANAGEMENT PANEL.

Minutes of meeting in County Buildings, Wellington Square, Ayr
on 18th June 2014 at 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillors Brian McGinley (Chair), Alec. Clark, John Hampton, Hugh Hunter and Provost Helen Moonie.

Apology: Councillor Allan Dorans.

Attending: V. Andrews, Executive Director – Resources, Governance and Organisation; and E. Wyllie, Committee Services Officer.

Also Attending: Councillor Brian Connolly (Chair of Corporate and Community Planning Standing Scrutiny Panel).

Opening Remarks.

The Chair thanked Members for agreeing to the change of the date of the meeting. It was noted that Councillor Dorans had submitted his apologies due to his attendance at the Licensing Board which was taking place at the same time as this rescheduled meeting. Also, the Chair of the Development and Environment Standing Scrutiny Panel was unable to attend this meeting.

1. Declaration of Interest.

There were no declarations of interest by Members of the Panel in terms of Council Standing Order No. 17 and the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

2. Minutes of previous meeting.

The Minutes of the previous meeting of 2nd April 2014 (issued) ([link attached](#)) were submitted and approved.

3. Review of Scrutiny – Panel Structures and Remits.

There was submitted a report (issued) ([link attached](#)) of 12th June 2014 by the Executive Director – Resources, Governance and Organisation requesting consideration of a revised Panel structure and remits taking account of this Panel's consideration and review of scrutiny over the past years, to be recommended to Council for approval.

A full discussion took place in relation to the proposed changes. Clarification was sought in respect of the distinct role of the Audit function and it was noted that one of the proposed Panels captured this distinction and that the previously adopted Audit handbook would require to be reviewed to reflect any subsequent changes as a result.

Clarification was sought in relation to the call-in process and it was noted that the same procedure would apply although only one Panel would deal with call-ins rather than the current process whereby call-ins were considered at the appropriate Standing Scrutiny Panel which were aligned to the remits of portfolio-holders.

Comments addressed a series of issues, as follows:- that the new approach was strategically different and although the current system was sound, it did require some adjustments; that, although radically changed, the proposed structure should address weaknesses within current scrutiny arrangements which had been identified within the Targeted Best Value Audit Work report considered at a Special meeting of the Council on 22nd April 2014; that other changing circumstances such as the introduction of Health and Social Care Integration and the Ayrshire Roads Alliance also contributed to the need for a review of current scrutiny arrangements; and that the proposed themed approach to scrutiny would take cognisance of all these elements and provide a corporate overview rather than being aligned to specific services.

Clarification was sought as to what consultation had taken place on the proposed changes. The Executive Director – Resources, Governance and Organisation advised that, as a result of the publication of the Targeted Best Value Audit Work which had overtaken some of the work previously tasked to this Panel, discussions had taken place with the Leader and Depute Leader of the Council. It was noted that the Chair of this Panel had also been consulted and cognisance given to various issues which had emerged from previous Scrutiny Panel meetings.

In relation to the proposal for quarterly informal meetings to take place between Portfolio-holders and the four Panel Chairs, comments were made on the advantages and disadvantages of such an approach. The Executive Director – Resources, Governance and Organisation commented that this suggestion had emerged from previous discussions of this Panel and should support a critical friend challenge approach to scrutiny and closer working between executive and scrutiny roles.

The development of a Scrutiny Handbook was discussed and it was noted that this would be a useful tool. It was also suggested that such a document should be submitted to one of the proposed Panels for consideration prior to Leadership Panel approval and implementation.

Within the current reporting format, clarification was sought in relation to how the outcome of consultations could be reported to Members and it was confirmed that this issue, along with capturing option appraisal information, was being further explored. Further comments were made in respect of following the public pound and clarification was sought as to how various changes would generally be communicated to internal and external partners.

It was noted that the Executive Director – Resources, Governance and Organisation would adjust the report and proposed remits being submitted to the meeting of the Council on 3rd July 2014 based on the discussion at this meeting. It was noted that these changes would be further consulted on with the Chair of this Panel.

The Panel, having considered the revised Panel remits as outlined at Appendix 1 of the report

Decided:

- (1) to refer the proposed Panel remits, subject to adjustment based on the discussion at this meeting, to the Council at its meeting of 3rd July 2014 for approval;
- (2) to agree to further recommend to Council that provision be made for increased joint working between Portfolio Holders and Chairs of the new Panels; and
- (3) to note that Officers proposed to bring detailed revisions to Standing Orders and the Scheme of Delegation, to reflect these changes, to a future meeting of the Council after summer recess for approval.

4. Panel Work Programme and Action Plan 2013/14.

There was submitted a progress update (issued) ([link attached](#)) of the Panel Work Programme and Action Plan for 2013/14 which provided the current position with the various themes and actions being undertaken by Members of the Panel and Officers.

A discussion took place in relation to the Panel Work Programme and Action Plan and it was recognised that such an approach had been useful to this Panel. It was noted that, if going forward with the proposed scrutiny structure, a similar approach and action note would be incorporated into the process.

The Panel

Decided: to note the current status of the Work Programme and Action Plan.

5. Update on Best Practice in Scrutiny.

There was submitted a report (issued) ([link attached](#)) of 12th June 2014 by the Executive Director – Resources, Governance and Organisation outlining the findings from the observational visit to the Scrutiny and Performance Committee of Dumfries and Galloway Council on 29th April 2014, undertaken by the Chair of the Scrutiny and Governance Management Panel and a Committee Services Officer, as part of the exercise in relation to best practice in scrutiny.

The Chair referred to the visit and commented that this had been a very helpful exercise and that the Members and Officers at Dumfries and Galloway Council had been open and hospitable. He then highlighted some of the key findings from the visit. In terms of continuous improvement in best practice in scrutiny, it was noted that the Executive Director - Resources, Governance and Organisation would explore where this area of work could be best captured within the proposed scrutiny structure.

The Panel

Decided: to note the findings from the observational scrutiny visit.

The Chair of the Corporate and Community Planning Standing Scrutiny Panel left the meeting at this point.

6. Annual Report.

There was submitted a report (issued) ([link attached](#)) of 12th June 2014 by the Executive Director – Resources, Governance and Organisation presenting the draft Annual Report for 2013/14 for consideration.

The Chair introduced the report and commented that this document provided a useful recording of the activity which had been undertaken by the Panel over the course of the year. In terms of scrutiny and governance, a discussion took place in respect of monitoring, reviewing and evaluation processes and comments were made as to how this type of information would be reflected within the proposed scrutiny structure. It was recognised that the Delivering Good Governance Annual Report would be the mechanism to capture such activity.

The Panel

Decided: to approve the Annual Report which would now be submitted to the Council meeting taking place on 3rd July 2014 for its consideration of the findings and the recommendations contained therein.

7. Delivering Good Governance – 2013/14 Assessment.

There was submitted a report (issued) ([link attached](#)) of 12th June 2014 by the Head of Policy, Community Planning and Public Affairs inviting Members to review the 2013/14 year end assessment against the Council's Delivering Good Governance Framework and informing of the outcome of the Elected Members' Survey.

In terms of the Council Plan and the development of the Service and Improvement Plans, clarification was sought in relation to the next steps within this process and the role of training in this regard. It was noted that within this overarching framework, these Plans filtered down into team plans and then staff PDRs. Comments were made in relation to cultural changes and ways in which this could be evidenced. It was recognised that this was a difficult area to capture although cultural change could be informed by the self evaluation toolkit 'How Good is our Council'. It was noted that a briefing session on this toolkit would be delivered to Members following the summer recess.

Clarification was sought in relation to the distinction between service and scrutiny reviews. The Executive Director – Resources, Governance and Organisation referred to the framework for the systematic review of all services which had been approved by the Leadership Panel at its meeting of 17th June 2014.

The Panel

Decided: to agree the 2013/14 year end assessment as outlined in Appendix 1 of the report.

Councillor Clark left the meeting during consideration of the above item.

The meeting ended at 11.45 a.m.